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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0283
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000745

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM PINR FAID KPAO MR

SUBJECT: NDI NEEDS HELP AS ELECTION CLOCK TICKS DOWN

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 695

¶B. NOUAKCHOTT 151

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

(C) Key Points

-- In a meeting with Ambassador June 9, NDI reps warned that funding problems were threatening NDI's future plans to help Mauritania successfully transition to democracy.

-- "We have been able to shoestring some good programs together...but if the funding delays we are facing now continue...significant opportunities will be lost."

-- Rep told Ambassador NDI would "reach out to the Carter Center" to explore a possible election monitoring partnership.

(C) Comments

-- The Embassy is doing all it can to seize the major opportunity here for the USG to strongly and directly influence the development of democracy in Mauritania.

-- NDI plays a critically important role in that USG effort, and the Embassy urges that NDI's funding requests be met as soon as possible. The election clock is ticking.

-- If the Mauritanians get it right, in terms of the series of elections they have planned, then Mauritania could serve as an example to both Arabs and Africans elsewhere. At least that is what the Mauritanians themselves want. We should help them set an example.

End Key Points and Comments.

¶1. (U) On June 9, National Democratic Institute (NDI) Senior Program Officer for the Middle East and North Africa Jeffrey England briefed Ambassador on the status of NDI's efforts to help Mauritania transition to democracy.

WAITING FOR FUNDING

¶ 2. (C) England told Ambassador that "we have been able to shoestring some good programs together with the NED (National Endowment for Democracy) money we've received, but we will need additional funding to get to the next step." England described some of NDI's recent efforts, including the political party public financing proposal and the two-day Women's Forum (ref A), saying that he hoped "these successes would attract the additional funding needed to get things rolling."

¶ 3. (C) England said NDI was still waiting for \$500,000 in Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) funding and \$250,000 in USAID money. "We were optimistic following the Pittman delegation (ref B) that these funds would be quickly allocated," England said, adding that "we're not sure why, but things have stalled and we're now unsure of what funding will come or when."

¶ 4. (C) England expressed concern for the funding implications for NDI programming both before and after the elections. "You know NDI believes in the long haul," England told Ambassador, adding that "what happens before the elections is just as important as what happens after, and if the funding delays we are facing now continue during our post election efforts, I'm afraid significant opportunities will be lost."

MAURITANIAN SUCCESS: AN EXAMPLE FOR AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

¶ 5. (C) England strongly agreed with Ambassador that Mauritania's current democratic transition presented "an enormous opportunity...for Mauritania and the region." "If

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the democratic transition is successful," England said, "Mauritania would be an important model for other Islamic countries moving towards Democracy." "This model has become even more important of late, given significant democratic setbacks in the Arab world, including IRI being asked to leave Egypt and NDI being asked to leave Bahrain," England said. "We don't want to see these same rollbacks here, and we'll keep probing under rocks for ways to keep our programs going," England concluded.

¶ 6. (C) Ambassador told England that "Mauritania's receptivity to international assistance gives NDI a unique opportunity to get involved here to help ensure the success of the transition," but cautioned that "this receptivity is transitory," and must be seized by NDI promptly.

ELECTION MONITORING: NDI LOOKS TOWARDS PARTNERSHIP WITH CARTER CENTER

¶ 7. (C) Responding to Ambassador's question about having US election monitors for the coming municipal and presidential elections, England said that "NDI partnered with the Carter Center during the Liberian and Palestinian elections, and could look towards such an election monitoring partnership here as well." Ambassador encouraged England to "look for such partnerships and collaboration" in NDI's efforts in Mauritania. England said that upon his return to Washington he would "discuss the opportunities" with NDI's election team and "reach out to the Carter Center."

LeBaron